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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

FRENCH FURNITURE.

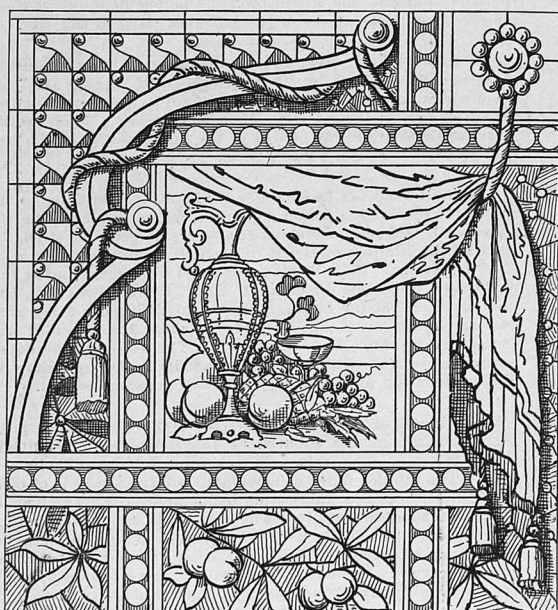
BY THEODORE CHILD.

PORCELAIN ORNAMENTS APPLIED TO FURNITURE.



LOOKING over the furniture of the French people we find that mosaic, marquetry in wood, metal, and other materials, ornaments of chiselled bronze were not the only means employed for ornamentation. Panels of Sevres porcelain and medallions and cameos of Wedgwood ware were also largely employed, especially during the reign of Louis XVI. In these classifications of reigns, however, we must not attempt to draw hard and fast lines. Louis XV., who founded the great Sevres porcelain manufactory, caused panels of porcelain to be inserted in his own furniture which he presented to his favorites. Mme. Du Barry, who was a passionate admirer of Sevres, had quantities of furniture decorated in this style in her villa at Luciennes, notably of a table, the top of which represented a picture in miniature after Leprince; a commode, richly adorned with mat gilt bronze and enriched with five Sevres panels, and in her bedroom a still finer commode, enriched with pictures in porcelain after Watteau and Vanloo, a piece of furniture which is said to have cost 80,000 livres in money of that time; a *secrétaire en armoire* decorated with panels of Sevres, flowers on a green ground; a vase and serpent clock, the foot of which was ornamented with inset panels of Sevres; a table with several tops one above the other, *à gradins*, also of Sevres porcelain, with flowers on a green ground, without counting a thermometer and a barometer richly mounted in bronze and enriched with porcelain panels decorated with children in miniature. Most of these pieces, which are found mentioned in the papers and inventories of Mme. Du Barry, were stolen or sold at the time of the Revolution of 1789, and very few remained in France. Thus, it will be seen, the decorative capacities of porcelain were by no means unknown under Louis XV., but nevertheless it was more particularly under Louis XVI. when Amboine wood, speckled and knotty mahogany, replaced marquetry mosaics, that porcelain plaques and Wedgwood cameos began to find generally a place in the panels, frises and drawer fronts; it is customary then and convenient to give to veneered furniture with ceramic decoration the name of the monarch who particularly loved and patronized it.

Under the reign of Louis XVI. the cabinet-makers seemed to have employed and exhausted all possible resources; bronze, chiselled and chased to the fineness of the finest goldsmiths' work, marquetry, incrustations and veneerings of all kinds, solid woods like ebony and mahogany, lacquer panels from the East,



STAINED GLASS WINDOW FOR DINING-ROOM, DESIGNED BY SAMUEL WEST, BOSTON.



THE GLADIATOR, BY GUILLEMIN, AT BAILEY, BANKS & BIDDLE, PHILADELPHIA.

lacquered paintings obtained by the "Vernis Martin" process. At this epoch ornamentation ended in a veritable debauch, and its exaggeration led to the neo-classic reaction of the end of the reign, the return to another simplicity of forms and sobriety of style, which gradually prepared the way for the neo-Greek art of the First Empire. The epoch of Louis XVI. is an epoch of transition, in which we find at once excess of ornament and excess of severity and poverty. The really characteristic work of the kind is such furniture as that which, freed from exaggerations of outline and redundant accessories, represent sufficiently the spirit of France in the eighteenth century, that it is to say elegance, distinction and grace without affectation. We find these qualities in those work-tables, those *jardinières* and consoles, those *armoires étagères* supported by graceful and delicately fluted legs and adorned with exquisitely chased bronzes and plaques of Wedgwood or Sevres with painted subjects, or merely simple bouquets of flowers surrounded by a frame of gold arabesque in relief on a blue, rose, Pompadour or spotted ground.

The application of ceramic decoration has been happily continued by some of the modern French *ébénistes*. M. Fourdinois, for instance, exhibited at the last exhibition of the Union Centrale a bookcase in the Louis XVI. style in ebony, inlaid with brass and pewter Boulle work and with Sevres plaques by Gobert inserted in the panels of the three doors of the lower part. The same artist frequently produces furniture in which all the processes of ornamentation here referred to are employed, marquetry, *pietra dura* incrustations, Boulle, etc. Other artists, too, like H. Sauvrezzy, Barbedienne, Dasson, Beurdeley and Christoffe constantly produce splendid pieces of furniture, which are masterpieces of workmanship and which have no fault but the fault of being inspired by the masterpieces of the XVI., XVII. and XVIII. century.

THE GLADIATOR.

GUILLEMIN'S magnificent bronze, shown in our cut, is taken from Gerome's great painting "*À l'empereur Morituri Te Salutant*," representing the gladiators before the Roman emperor. The height of the piece is 45 inches and the diameter of base 14 inches. The commanding and forceful figure stands expectantly over the prostrate form of his antagonist, awaiting the reversed thumbs, permitting him to spare the vanquished. The whole treatment is worthy the grandeur of the subject and the work is a masterpiece of the sculptor as its original is of the artist.